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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language and English-language dailies gave extensive straightforward news reporting and editorial coverage January 6 to the controversy concerning the import of U.S. beef. Taiwan's Legislative Yuan on January 5 amended the Act Governing Food Sanitation which bans the import of six types of "risky" U.S. beef products. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a front-page banner headline reading "Amendments to Law Concerning U.S. Beef Passes the Third Reading, Consumers' Foundation Strongly Calls for Renegotiation [of the U.S. Beef Deal]." The KMT-leaning "China Times" also ran a front-page banner headline reading "Using the Act Governing Food Sanitation to Block U.S. Beef [Imports]; United States: Difficult to Expand Trade and Economic [Relations] with Taiwan."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial lambasted President Ma Ying-jeou for his arbitrary action, saying that Ma's mishandling of the U.S. beef issue has had an impact on Taiwan-U.S. relations. Editorials in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" and the pro-unification "United Daily News" discussed the U.S. beef issue and the recent remarks by the American Chamber of Commerce in Taiwan on U.S.-Taiwan relations. Both articles urged Taiwan to strengthen its relations with the United States. Editorials in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" also chimed in by saying Ma should mend fences with Uncle Sam. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" also criticized Ma and said it is Ma, not the Taiwan people, who should bear the blame for the U.S. beef flap. End summary.

A) "Ma Ying-jeou's Acting Arbitrarily Has an Impact on Taiwan-U.S. Relations"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] editorialized (1/6):

"The Legislative Yuan passed the third reading of the amendments to the Act Governing Food Sanitation Tuesday, which bans the import of six types of "risky" U.S. beef products -- skull, brain, eyes, spinal cord, ground beef and beef offal. The move was akin to rejecting the Taiwan-U.S. beef protocol and has immediately aroused displeasure from the United States. AIT issued a statement Tuesday, not only criticizing Taiwan for unilaterally abrogating the protocol but also pointing out bluntly that such an action has undermined Taiwan's credibility as a responsible trading partner, making it more difficult for Washington to conclude future agreements to expand and strengthen bilateral trade and economic ties going forward. The U.S. reaction indicated that the U.S. beef issue has caused Taiwan-U.S. relations to regress seriously. Ma Ying-jeou's recent bragging that Taiwan-U.S. relations are in their best state for the past six decades has become very ironic. ... The U.S. beef talks is a major diplomatic setback for the Ma administration, showing that Ma's campaign slogan 'We are ready' was nothing but a lack of governance ability and grand planning. ...

"Frankly speaking, what interests did Taiwan really get from the [U.S. beef] talks? Was it progress in the Taiwan-U.S. 'Trade and

Investment Framework' (TIFA) talks, Washington being willing to sign a Free Trade Agreement with Taiwan, or just Taiwan being included in the U.S. visa-waiver program? In other words, since there are risks involved in importing U.S. beef, Taiwan must naturally get [some] substantial national interests in return if it agrees to sign the protocol -- only that will make [our] concessions meaningful. But when [we] look back, it seems that the Ma administration evidently failed to use that as a bargaining chip to pursue the greater interests for its people. It gained nothing [from the protocol], but was quite pleased with itself and asked its people to accept [the final result]. ... To get to the bottom of it, the Taiwan people are clearly aware of the importance of Taiwan-U.S. relations, but they also know that it is all because of the Ma administration's acting arbitrarily and mishandling that has led to the consequence today. ..."

B) "Strengthening Relations with the United States Is the Only Workable Method"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 530,000] editorialized (1/6):

"... Taiwan-U.S. relations are the cornerstone of Taiwan's foreign relations and the protector of the Taiwan-centric awareness and the island's democratic lifestyle. It is correct when Ma's team proposed the grand strategy of 'harmonizing with China, befriending Japan and maintaining a close relationship with the United States.' But when it comes to execution [of the strategy], one discovered that the [Ma] administration only focuses on harmonizing with China, and hardly any work has been done in building a close relationship with the United States. ..."

"... Taiwan's relations with the United States, Japan and China must be maintained at least as an equilateral triangle, or it must be a triangle, of which its relations with China and the United States are equilateral. ... This is common sense in international relations, something that President Ma and [National Security Council Secretary-General] Su Chi, who had all studied in the United States, must be aware of. But it appears that Ma's team has abandoned its efforts to lobby the United States and Japan. In this vein, not only fewer and fewer elites in the United States will care about Taiwan, but it has created more opportunities for China to lobby American elites to call for the abolishment of the 'Taiwan Relations Act' -- a development quite upsetting to the elites who have spoken in favor of Taiwan. Taiwan must strengthen its relations with the United States so as to balance the dangerous situation that it is tilting overly to China. In that way, the Taiwan people will be able to eliminate their doubts about Ma's tilting toward China and pushing for unification. ..."

C) "Breaking away from Taiwan and Leaning toward China -- the United States' Cross-Strait Policy Direction"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (1/6):

"The American Chamber of Commerce in Taiwan advocated that the United States should sell weapons to Taiwan, including 60 F-16 C/D fighter jets. The American Chamber of Commerce said the White House's hesitation toward arms sales to Taiwan stems from its 'perception that Taiwan is a hurdle to the United States' interests in Asia.' One must not take this comment as a kind of lobbying rhetoric by the arms dealers alone. ... Perhaps this does not just indicate that the sale of the fighter jets will be shelved again; instead, it showed that the United States' cross-Strait policy has entered a framework of 'breaking away from Taiwan and leaning toward China.' ..."

D) "The Beef War Being Fought on the Third Front"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (1/6):

"The beef war triggered by the signing of a protocol on Oct. 22 last year is being fought on the third front now. ... Lawmakers passed the amendment yesterday, opening the third front for the war that had been fought on the home front between the Kuomintang (KMT)

administration and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The war in the second stage was won by the opposition party, which succeeded in getting the amendment passed with the defection of most of the legislators of the ruling KMT. It was serious loss attributed to President Ma Ying-jeou, who doubles as chairman of the KMT. The loss was made bitter when President Ma received a warning from a powerful U.S. senator, who is a friend of Taiwan. ... Well, Senator Baucus' hope was dashed. President Ma cannot reverse the decision Taiwan's legislature has taken. The only thing he can do now is to do his very best to 'communicate' with, and 'explain' to, the U.S. Meanwhile, his government is bracing for U.S. retaliation. ...

"There is little doubt that the Ma government is having a very hard time continuing the war on the third front. ... As a matter of fact, Washington had suggested that the protocol be signed after the Dec. 5 elections. President Ma, convinced that the U.S. beef import issue was no issue at all, had the protocol signed. It's a non-issue, of course. But the timing was disastrous. The opposition party needed an issue and jumped at the god-send opportunity, stirring up the hidden anti-Ma and anti-U.S. feelings of the people to win the mayoralty and magistracy elections. It did to Ma's dismay. And he is facing another probable loss in the three legislative by elections by Feb. 9 [sic]. ... All this means Ma has to mend fences with Uncle Sam as soon as possible. Whether Taipei can win an American understanding to get TIFA negotiations under way at the earliest possible date depends on how persuasive Ma can be to absolve himself of 'mea culpa,' albeit he may put all the blame on the stupidly obstructionist lawmakers of his own party and the opposition."

E) "Ma, Not the People, Bears Blame for U.S. Beef Flap"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (1/6):

"President Ma Ying-jeou displayed to a national television audience yesterday his inability to grasp the fundamentals of democratic politics when he blamed Taiwan's 23 million people for the flap on the question of liberalization of risky beef products from the United States. ... After all, the reason behind the series of policy disputes from U.S. beef to swine influenza vaccinations and the controversial cross-strait economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) and Ma's plunging approval and public confidence ratings below 30 percent lies less in the lack of effectiveness of government propaganda but deepening mistrust and intensifying

anxiety over the Ma government's habitual 'black box' method of decision-making and operation. ...

"In light of Ma's evident belief that the Taiwan people bear responsibility, we urge Taiwan voters to take corrective action in early 2012 to reverse the mistake they made in early 2008 in electing him and giving the KMT a three-fourths majority in the Legislative Yuan. Voters in Taichung, Taitung and Taoyuan Counties have an opportunity to begin this corrective action in legislative by-elections Saturday. Finally, we urge Taiwan citizens to protest the Ma administration's arrogant decision to 'blame the people' and protect their own health by declining to purchase U.S. 'beef in bone.'"

STANTON